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AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:

Please amend the claims as follows:

1. (Currently Amended) A method for sintering a porous-glass material, having a core inside the porous-glass material, in a furnace to form a glass base material, which is a base material for an optical fiber, comprising:

preparing a ring heater having an opening, through which said porous-glass material passes, for heating said porous-glass material;

preparing said porous-glass material having an outer diameter (d) within a predetermined range, said predetermined range being predetermined based on an inner diameter (D) of said opening of said ring heater;

putting said porous-glass material, formed by performing said preparing said porous-glass material, in the furnace; and

heating said porous-glass material in an atmosphere of dehydration gas and inert gas with said ring heater,

wherein said predetermined range of said outer diameter(d) of said porous-glass material comprises substantially ~~$0.5 \times D \leq d \leq 0.9 \times D$~~ $0.5 \times D < d < 0.9 \times D$.

2. (Canceled)

3. (Previously Presented) A method as claimed in claim 1, wherein said predetermined range of said outer diameter (d) of said porous-glass material comprises substantially $0.6 \times D \leq d \leq 0.8 \times D$.

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4. (Previously Presented) A method as claimed in claim 1, wherein said predetermined range of said outer diameter (d) of said porous-glass material is predetermined based on a vertical length (L) of said ring heater.
5. (Previously Presented) A method as claimed in claim 4, wherein said predetermined range of said outer diameter (d) of said porous-glass material comprises substantially $0.5 \times L \leq d \leq 0.9 \times L$.
6. (Previously Presented) A method as claimed in claim 1, wherein said predetermined range of said outer diameter (d) of said porous-glass material is predetermined so that an eccentricity of a core inside said glass base material manufactured by sintering said porous-glass material becomes substantially 0.4 % or less.
7. (Original) A method as claimed in claim 1, wherein said heating heats said porous-glass material in a furnace that is provided inside said opening of said ring heater so that a part of said furnace is surrounded by said ring heater.
8. (Currently Amended) A method for manufacturing a preform, which is a base material of an optical fiber, in a furnace, comprising:
- preparing a ring heater having an opening, through which a porous-glass material, having a core inside said porous-glass material, which is a base material of said preform, passes, for heating said porous-glass material;

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forming said porous-glass material having an outer diameter (d) within a predetermined range, said predetermined range being predetermined based on an inner diameter (D) of said opening of said ring heater;

putting said porous-glass material, formed by performing said forming said porous-glass material, in the furnace;

sintering said porous-glass material in an atmosphere of dehydration gas and inert gas with said ring heater; and

elongating said sintered porous-glass material to form said preform,

wherein said predetermined range of said outer diameter (d) of said porous-glass material comprises substantially ~~$0.5 \times D \leq d \leq 0.9 \times D$~~ $0.5 \times D < d < 0.9 \times D$.

9. (Canceled)

10. (Previously Presented) A method as claimed in claim 8, wherein said predetermined range of said outer diameter (d) of said porous-glass material comprises substantially $0.6 \times D \leq d \leq 0.8 \times D$.

11. (Original) A method as claimed in claim 8, wherein said predetermined range of said outer diameter (d) of said porous-glass material is determined based on a vertical length (L) of said ring heater.

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12. (Previously Presented) A method as claimed in claim 11, wherein said predetermined range of said outer diameter (d) of said porous-glass material comprises substantially $0.5 \times L \leq d \leq 0.9 \times L$.

13. (Previously Presented) A method as claimed in claim 8, wherein said predetermined range of said outer diameter (d) of said porous-glass material is determined so that an eccentricity of a core inside said sintered porous-glass material becomes substantially 0.4 % or less.

14. (Original) A method as claimed in claim 8, wherein said heating heats said porous-glass material in a furnace that is provided inside said opening of said ring heater so that a part of said furnace is surrounded by said ring heater.

15. (Currently Amended) A method for manufacturing an optical fiber in a furnace, comprising:

preparing a ring heater having an opening, through which a porous-glass material, having a core inside said porous-glass material, which is a base material of said optical fiber, passes, for heating said porous-glass material;

forming said porous -glass material having an outer diameter (d) within a predetermined range, said predetermined range being predetermined based on an inner diameter (D) of said opening of said ring heater;

putting said porous-glass material, formed by performing said forming said porous-glass material, in the furnace;

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sintering said porous-glass material in an atmosphere of dehydration gas and inert gas with said ring heater; and
elongating said sintered porous-glass material to form a preform; and
drawing said preform to form said optical fiber,
wherein said predetermined range of said outer diameter (d) of said porous-glass material comprises substantially ~~$0.5 \times D \leq d \leq 0.9 \times D$~~ $0.5 \times D < d < 0.9 \times D$.

16. (Canceled)

17. (Previously Presented) A method as claimed in claim 15, wherein said predetermined range of said outer diameter (d) of said porous-glass material comprises substantially $0.6 \times D \leq d \leq 0.8 \times D$

18-20. (Canceled)